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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (06/29): PALESTINIANS WONDER IF
U.S. WILL STAND ITS GROUND ON SETTLEMENTS

Main Stories:

All dailies lead with wire reports of an Israel-radio announcement (June 28) that Israeli Defense Minister Barak will propose a "limited freezing" of settlement activities for three months in response to the US pressure. Barak will be discussing this proposal on July 29 during his meeting with US Envoy Mitchell in New York, according to reporting. The proposal will exclude "settlement activities" in Jerusalem and will not prohibit the construction of 2000 units in there. Al-Quds and Al-Ayyam also report that Israeli settlers expect settlements to continue growing despite U.S. pressure.

The three dailies front page reports that Hamas and Fatah will pursue national reconciliation talks in Cairo on June 28. According to reports, Egypt is determined to end the conflict between the two factions, and produce a reconciliation agreement made on July 7. Fatah senior official Sha'ath stated that a committee has been formed to discuss the issue of political prisoners, adding that the talks intend to tackle three major issues: 1) Legislative elections 2) formation of a committee with all factions to establish a national unity government in accordance with an Egyptian proposal 3) restructuring the security forces.

Al-Quds reports that the U.S. and EU agreement with an Egyptian initiative to include Hamas in a "comprehensive political process" that would include a permanent cease-fire with Israel, the achievement of internal Palestinian reconciliation and the pursuit of negotiations with Israel based on the Arab Peace Initiative. The report also discusses the visit by a U.S. official to Damascus two weeks ago, who is quoted in Saudi-based daily Al-Hayat stating, "Hamas officials have recently announced important statements that are worth consideration."

Al-Quds' and Al-Hayat Al-Jadida's front pages report on a fact finding committee assigned by the U.N. to look into Israeli violations committed against civilians during the recent "war in Gaza." The committee began hearings on June 28, calling Palestinian civilians who alleged abuse by Israeli forces during the conflict.

Al-Quds's and Al-Ayyam's front pages report that Palestinian Authority(PA) Prime Minister Fayyad will be traveling to the U.S. next week to meet with U.S. officials and discuss recent developments in the Palestinian Territories. Fayyad will also discuss the financial crisis faced by the PA in large part due to the delay in receipt of financial assistance from the donor community.

Al-Hayat Al-Jadida's and Al-Ayyam's front pages include reports by the Palestinian Authority Ministry of Health that 11 new cases of H1N1 have been reported in the areas of Nablus and Ramallah, increasing the total number of cases in the West Bank to 26.

Weekend stories:

Al Quds' front page gives details on alleged Israeli plans to expand Jerusalem area settlement Maale Adumim, "from Nabi Mousa to Sai'r." Reports claim that Israel has attempted to seize more than 129,000 acres of land in the Eastern area of the West Bank in order to then register them with the Maale Adumim land registration office under the pretext that they have been abandoned, coverage notes. Chief Palestinian Authority negotiator Quray, called upon President Obama

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to quickly intervene to stop such Israeli measures on Palestinian lands. Quray warned the international community that land confiscation and settlement expansion by Israelis in the West Bank and Jerusalem will lead to more violence in the region as a whole.

"Pessimistic atmosphere overshadows meetings: Fatah and Hamas resume dialogue in Cairo in attempt to end disagreements" (Al Quds, Al Ayyam, Al Hayat Al Jadida): The sixth round of Palestinian national dialogue took place in Cairo over the weekend between Fatah and Hamas. The meeting was overshadowed by doubt and pessimism, based upon accusations between the two parties regarding political arrests in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Reporting concluded that on-going bi-lateral meetings have failed so far, despite Egypt's proposal that an agreement ending the division would be reached by July 7th.

"Israeli army conducts operations in Farahin area, closes Jaba' and A'tara checkpoints for hours- Settlers attack Palestinian houses in Silwan and Israeli soldiers attack Palestinians and peace activists in Bayt Ummar" (Al Quds, Al Ayyam, Al Hayat Al Jadida). All dailies front paged news that three Palestinians were injured by Israeli settler fire when settlers attacked Palestinian houses in Silwan neighbourhood in Jerusalem. Israeli police forces at the scene are alleged to have prevented ambulances from rescuing the wounded. Additionally, seven Palestinians and peace activists, (foreign and Israeli) were injured in a conflict with the Israeli army in Bayt Ummar, north of Hebron during their0 weekly protests.

BLOCK QUOTES:

1) Al-Quds editorial, "Again, useless dialogue!"(06/29): "It is awkward that everyone is focusing extensively on national dialogue... The dialogue succeeded in distracting our attention away from the real challenges that face our people and our cause, including settlement activities, violations against Jerusalem, the siege, arrests... It is time for the factions discussing in Cairo to realize that their division has not halted any Israeli measures. They should listen to each other and to their people in order to put an end to these crises [division and its implications]".

2) Omar Hilmi Al-Ghoul, Al-Ayyam: "Will the U.S. be deceived?" (06/29): "The U.S. administration knows how to manage Israeli

tricks [Barak's proposal of a temporary freeze in settlement activities]... The question remains - will U.S. officials let Barak get away with his proposal or will they ask him to completely halt settlements if Israel really wants its strategic relations with the U.S. to continue?"

WALLES